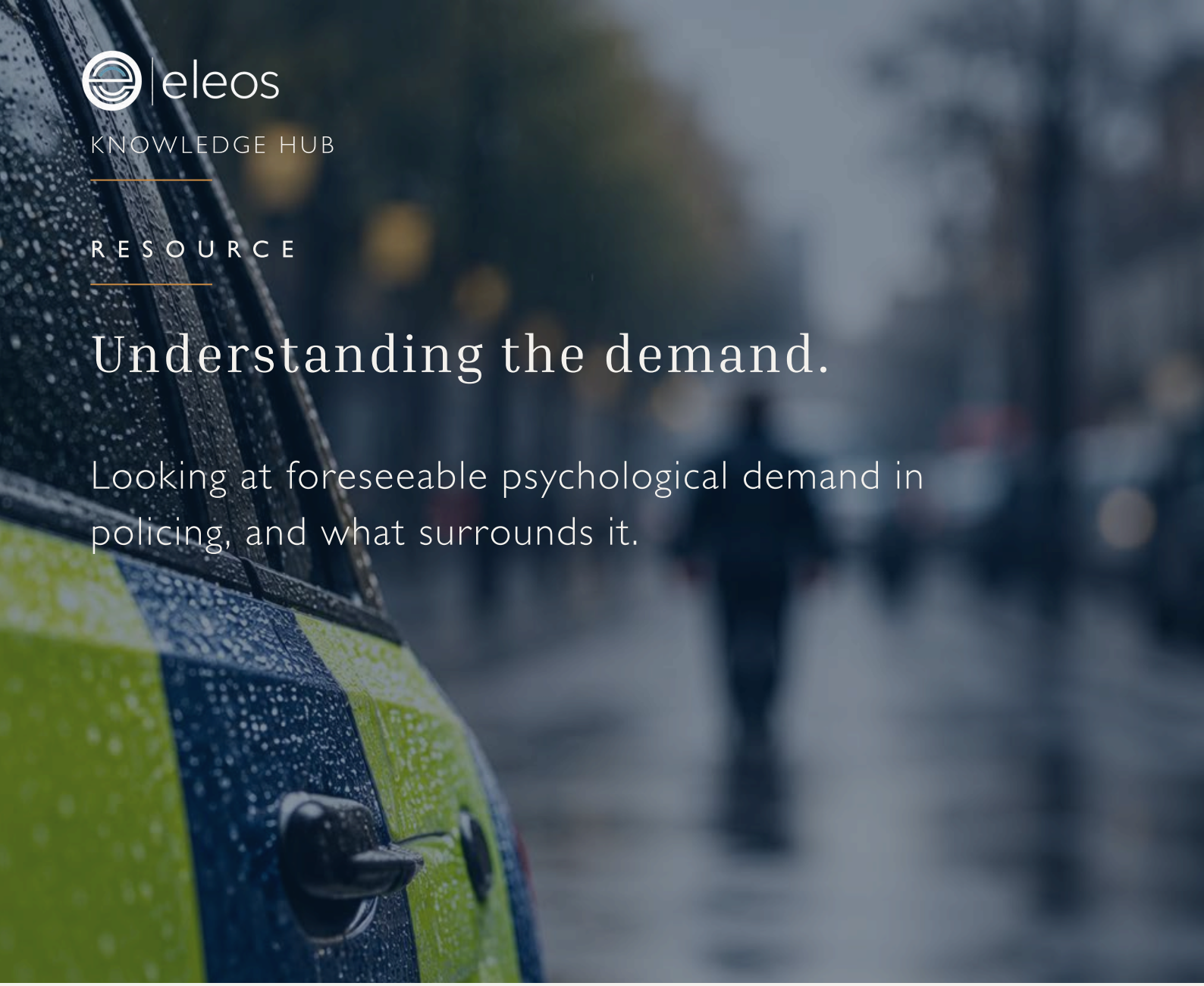


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KNOWLEDGE HUB

RESOURCE

Understanding the demand.

Looking at foreseeable psychological demand in policing, and what surrounds it.

Purpose

Some psychological demand comes with the work.

The purpose of this resource is not to score that demand or decide whether somebody should be able to cope with it. It is to help you look more closely at what a role or area of work repeatedly asks of people, what already helps them carry it and where avoidable gaps may exist.

Use this resource when:

You can use it to think about your own work, discuss demand within a team, or review a particular role or area of policing.

Choose one role, team or area of work to consider.

1 What does the work actually ask of people?

Start with the work rather than with whether people appear to be coping. What are people in this role repeatedly exposed to or expected to carry? It may be helpful to consider more than critical incidents, and remember this is about trying to understand the pattern of demand, rather than producing a list of everything that is difficult about policing.

EXPOSURE

What might people repeatedly see, hear, read or experience?

This could include direct exposure to trauma, distressing calls, images or evidence, conflict, aggression, grief or the consequences of harm.

RESPONSIBILITY

What decisions, risks or consequences do people carry?

Are they responsible for other people's safety, significant decisions, complex cases or situations in which getting something wrong could have serious consequences?

RELATIONAL DEMAND

What do interactions with other people require?

Consider managing distress, anger, fear or conflict; delivering difficult information; maintaining professional boundaries; or repeatedly absorbing other people's experiences.

OPERATIONAL DEMAND

What does the way the work is organised add?

Consider workload, shift patterns, interruptions, staffing, unpredictability, competing priorities, scrutiny and the opportunity, or lack of opportunity, to recover between demands.

CUMULATIVE DEMAND

What becomes significant because it happens repeatedly?
Is there work that may be manageable once but harder when it is experienced again and again?

2 What currently protects people around that demand?

Now look at what helps people carry the work, remembering that protection is not only a formal wellbeing service. The question isn't whether every possible protection exists, it's whether the protection available matches the demand people are actually carrying.

PEOPLE

Are there trusted colleagues?

Do supervisors know their people well enough to notice when something changes?

Can somebody say that a job has affected them without feeling they have declared themselves unable to cope?

WORKING PRACTICES

Is there any opportunity to recover after particularly demanding work?

Can workload or exposure be adjusted when necessary?

Are predictable periods of high demand planned for?

LEADERSHIP

How do supervisors respond when somebody has had a difficult experience?

Is psychological demand talked about as an ordinary part of managing the work, or mainly once somebody is struggling?

SUPPORT

What informal, peer, occupational or clinical support exists?

Do people understand what each type of support is for?

How easy is it to access in practice?

LIFE OUTSIDE WORK

Does the way the work is organised allow enough recovery outside it?

Are there periods when the combination of work and life demands may leave somebody with less capacity than usual?

3 Where's the gap?

Put the first two parts together and for each significant demand you identified, ask:

- **What currently helps people manage this?**
- **Does that protection happen routinely, or only when somebody asks for help?**
- **Who is likely to notice if the demand begins to have an impact?**
- **How much responsibility sits with the individual to recognise it themselves?**
- **What happens before formal support becomes necessary?**

You may identify a demand that is well understood and well contained; you may identify good support that people rarely use; or you may find a predictable demand with very little around it until somebody begins to struggle. That gap is useful information.

4 What does the situation need from you?

Where you have identified a gap, consider what would make the greatest practical difference.

UNDERSTAND	Do we need a clearer picture of the psychological demand in this work?
REDUCE	Is any part of the demand avoidable or unnecessarily increased by the way the work is organised?
PROTECT	What could routinely sit around a demand that cannot be removed?
NOTICE	How would we recognise that the work is affecting someone differently? Who is realistically in a position to notice?
SUPPORT	What needs to be available when ordinary protective factors are no longer enough? How easily can someone move from informal support to something more?

Not every demand needs a new service. Sometimes the most important change is closer to the work: a better conversation, more informed supervision, clearer expectations, an opportunity to recover, a change in working practice or support that people already know and trust.

Before you move on.

Look again at the role, team or work you chose.

- What psychological demand is foreseeable because of the work itself?
- Which demands are occasional, and which accumulate over time?
- What already helps people manage them?
- Where are we relying mainly on the individual to tell us when the work has become too much?
- What could reasonably happen before someone needs formal help?
- If we already know the work places psychological demands on people, what should we put in place to help manage those demands?

Understanding the demand is the starting point. What matters is what the organisation, team and people around the work do with that understanding.

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www.eleosgroup.co.uk
Eleos Group
@eleosgroupuk

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